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HEALTH OVERVIEW

In 1900, 580 of every 100,000 U.S. residents died of infectious diseases such as influenza, pneumonia, diphtheria, tuberculosis and gastrointestinal illnesses. By 1910, only 270 of every 100,000 Utah residents died of infectious diseases. ¹⁹⁸⁷ Today, a mere 20 of every 100,000 Utah residents die of these causes. Preventive strategies, such as improved sanitation, better education, improved nutrition and immunizations, were the major factors which reduced the number of deaths caused by infectious disease.

Chronic diseases have become the major cause of mortality in Wasatch County today (see Table 1). Risk factors which contribute to chronic diseases involve personal health choices and behaviors that are amenable to preventive measures and education. The recent decline in coronary heart disease deaths, both nationally and in Utah, has occurred as a result of improvements in health related behaviors.^{1,2} According to the 1979 Surgeon General's report Healthy People, as many as half of all U.S. deaths may be due to unhealthy behavior or lifestyle.³ The report also states that by controlling five critical variables - diet, smoking, lack of exercise, alcohol abuse and use of

1. Pell S. Fayerweather WE. Trends in the incidence of myocardial infarction and in associated mortality and morbidity in a large employed population, 1957-1983. N Engl J Med 1985; 312:1005-11.

2. Bureau of Vital Statistics, Utah Department of Health.

3. Healthy People: The Surgeon General's Report on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Health Service, 1979, p. 14.